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Sierra Club Releases Report on Water Conservation in North Central Texas – *Progress Made in Last Decade, Additional Steps Needed to Achieve Potential Savings*

(Austin)—The Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club today released a report evaluating water conservation efforts in North Central Texas, a region that has been criticized in the past for excessive use of water in its cities and suburbs. The Sierra Club report – ***Thirsting for Less: Water Conservation Progress and Potential in North Central Texas*** – found that over the past decade progress has been made on conserving water in the region, which covers the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. But the report also notes that progress has been neither smooth nor universal, and state resources to complement and bolster the efforts of local and regional water utilities and suppliers have not been forthcoming. ***Thirsting for Less*** concludes with a recommendation of additional local, regional, and state actions that could be taken so that the full potential of conservation to meet water needs may be achieved.

“At a time when much attention is being focused on the issue of addressing Texas state water needs, it’s important to evaluate how well water suppliers in various parts of the state are conserving our existing water resources,” said Ken Kramer, volunteer Water Resources Chair for the Sierra Club’s Lone Star Chapter. **“North Central Texas is a heavily populated region whose projected future water infrastructure proposals constitute a significant portion of the estimated costs of the state water plan. The region has made and is continuing to make progress in conserving water, but the potential to do much more is there. Achieving greater levels of water conservation would allow the region to be better positioned to meet future water needs and delay or avoid some of those infrastructure costs,”** Kramer noted.

Among the findings in the report:

- North Texas Municipal Water District – a wholesale water supplier serving several suburban cities – reported in 2010 that it had saved more than 11.6 billion gallons of water through conservation and approximately twice that amount through wastewater reuse.
- Tarrant Regional Water District – another wholesale supplier – saved 45.6 billion gallons of water between 2007 and 2011 at a cost of only 10 cents per 1000 gals.
- Dallas Water Utilities has saved close to an average 45,000 acre-feet of water per year since 2001 through its conservation efforts, but it will still take until 2050 for the City to meet the state’s recommended “gallons per capita per day” (gpcd) goal on its current schedule. *
- The Dallas City Council recently adopted ongoing restrictions on outdoor landscape watering, but so far the other cities in the region that were expected to adopt similar restrictions – Arlington, Fort Worth, and Irving – have not done so.



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- The City of Fort Worth has implemented a number of “best management practices” for conservation identified in a state guidebook but in the last two years most of its water savings has come from wastewater reuse rather than conservation.
- The City of Plano’s progress in reducing its per capita water use has been minimal in the two years that its conservation plan has been implemented, and despite its target of 225 gpcd by 2014, the city’s per capita use was 236 gpcd in 2010 and 241 gpcd in 2011. *
- The expectations for what could be achieved in water savings were relatively unchanged from the 2006 to the 2011 water plans for the region, and projected volumes of conserved water in the those two plans are much lower than those in the initial regional plan in 2001.
- Since a number of water conservation programs in North Central Texas have only been implemented within the last few years, there is every reason to believe that more conservation will be achieved in the region in the future.

The Sierra Club report enumerates several additional steps that could be taken to advance water conservation in North Central Texas in order to achieve its potential benefits to the region. The Sierra Club recommends that local, regional, and/or state water entities:

- Update and expand adoption of best management practices for water conservation.
- Establish more aggressive goals & targets for water use reductions in conservation plans.
- Implement a well-funded statewide water education campaign and/or a region-wide water education program in North Central Texas.
- Continue, enhance, and provide State support for regional coordination of water conservation efforts in North Central Texas (the report notes the positive impacts of the current informal Water Efficiency Network of North Texas – WENNT – in promoting collaborative water conservation efforts among water suppliers in the region).
- Promote consistent water conservation measures in the region through similar ordinances.
- Consider alternatives to the use of “take-or-pay” contracts for the sale of water from wholesale providers to retail water suppliers (take-or-pay contracts require retail suppliers to pay for a certain volume of water each year regardless of whether or not they use that volume of water in a particular year)

Thirsting for Less is available in electronic form on the Sierra Club’s Lone Star Chapter website at <http://www.texas.sierraclub.org/water/20121213ThirstingforLess.pdf>. This Sierra Club report was done as part of the Texas Living Waters Project, a joint public policy and public education project of the Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club and the National Wildlife Federation. The report was researched and written by consultant Margot Clarke, who formerly served as a policy analyst with the Texas State Comptroller’s Office.

* **PLEASE NOTE:** The use of “gallons per capita per day” or gpcd as a metric for comparing water use among different cities and regions is often problematic for a variety of reasons, including the different mix of water customers that may affect the figures from one area to another. Gpcd is most appropriately used in evaluating the progress of a particular water provider in reducing water use in its service area over a period of time. The state water agencies and the state Water Conservation Advisory Council are currently developing more precise metrics for measuring progress in the implementation of water conservation programs.]